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ABSTRACT

This article briefly reviews the history, technique, and appropriateness of bibliotherapy as a therapeutic technique. The term bibliotherapy is defined and its history outlined. The three most commonly found types of bibliotherapy (institutional, clinical, and developmental) are listed and then described according to client, therapist, and materials used. The article concentrates on the use of bibliotherapy in an institutional setting. Areas in which the therapy is beneficial are noted, as are cases in which it should not be used. Research indicates that bibliotherapy is effective for increasing assertiveness, bringing about attitude changes and enhancing therapeutic gains. Bibliotherapy can also be used to meet the following clinical objectives: (1) projecting self into literary characters, making it easier for the client to discuss problems; (2) dispelling the client's sense of isolation; (3) reinforcing societal expectations; (4) enabling clients to gain support and resolve conflicts; and (5) learning problem-solving techniques. Bibliotherapy can meet such goals within the context of small groups and on an individual basis. Suggestions are made for the selection of material for small groups and for individual use. (ABB)

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TITLE: BIBLIOTHERAPY: AN ADJUNCT TO THERAPY

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Bibliotherapy: An Adjunct to Therapy

Abstract: The art of Bibliotherapy as a therapeutic technique has been in existence since man's early experimentation with writing and drama. This article reviews the history, technique, and appropriatness of Bibliotherapy.

Our lives, laws, philosophies, history and cultures are bound-up and placed on shelves to be shared with others. In this modern society we have the luxury of being able to learn through the eyes of our ancestors and develop these perceptions into contemporary ideals. Bibliotherapy has been developed as a valid addition to therapy in the treatment of many psychiatric problems both in group and individual situations.

Bibliotherapy is defined as a specifically selected group of guided readings that assist individuals in gleaning insight and understanding into themselves and their environment. It affords the opportunity to learn through the experience of others, while developing problem-solving techniques. Bibliotherapy is not a new idea. The first written reference to the usage of bibliotherapy in the medical model was in 1853 when Galt wrote an essay on reading for the mentally insane. However, in 1751 Dr. Benjamin Rush, father of American Psychiatry introduced the usage of music and literature as ancillary treatments for psychiatric patients. In 1876 a Readers Assistance Position was released establishing the foundation for what we refer to today as Bibliotherapy.

Although the concept of Bibliotherapy has not been widely used it has been used by a variety of disciplines in numerous settings.

Joyce Rubin (1978) cites three types of Bibliotherapy situations as the most commonly found; they include institutional, clinical, and developmental. In the institutional environment the client is a psychiatric or medical patient, prisoner, or client in private practice. The therapist is generally the physician, educational therapist or library team. The material used is generally didactic in nature and the goal is usually to provide information and assist the patient in gaining insight. Within the clinical setting the client is usually a person with an emotional and/or behavioral problem. Therapists include; the physician, mental health worker, or librarian. The literature used is usually imaginative in nature and is to help the client gain insight or change an undesirable behavior. In the developmental setting the clients are usually people in crisis situations. Therapists include librarians, teachers, and counselors to name a few. The material used is a combination of imaginative and didactic and it is used to emphasize normal development and self-actualization.

This article will concentrate on the usage of Bibliotherapy in an institutional setting. It works well when incorporated into the medical model and is often used by psychiatrists, psychologists, educational therapists and librarians. The research indicates that the usage of Biblio-

therapy is beneficial in the following areas:

- . preventive medicine
- . self-help groups
- . self-motivated neurotic patients
- . schizophrenics
- . relatives of patients
- . alcoholics
- . nearly recovered psychotics.

Menninger who helped pioneer and promote the field of Bibliotherapy states that it should not be used with the following types of people: psychotics, obsessive, compulsive neurotics, patients with anxiety state or individuals undergoing psychoanalysis. Bibliotherapy is viewed as an adjunct to other forms of therapy. The research indicates it is effective for increasing assertiveness, bringing about attitude change and it enhances therapeutic gains.

Bibliotherapy in the broader sense can be instrumental in meeting the following goals with clients in both small groups and on an individual basis:

- . The projection of self into the character making it easier for the individual to discuss problems.
- . Identifying with the characters and other clients can dispell the individual's sense of isolation.
- . Literature can help reinforce societal expectations.
- . It can enable individuals to gain support and resovle conflict through identification with the characters, insight, and the working through process.

- Problem-solving techniques can be learned through character solutions and the group process.
- The clients spectrum can be broadened in the following areas: personal, social, educational and vocational.

Materials need to be carefully picked to meet the needs of the individuals or small group. In the small group situation a homogeneous group should be selected. Prior to the group, the facilitator needs to be familiar with the selected reading and the goals to be achieved during that session. Questions should be developed as a guide toward meeting the identified goals. On an individual basis the Bibliotherapy literature can more accurately pinpoint the strengths and needs of the client.

Bibliotherapy provides multiple stepping stones toward solutions. Through utilization of the third person the individual becomes less vulnerable and often more willing to self disclose. When appropriate literature is used with the proper patient, it can provide an additional avenue toward therapeutic gains.

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